

COMMANDER ZEITA MERCHANT

COMMANDING OFFICER

USCG MARINE SAFETY UNIT CHICAGO



Commander Merchant assumed duties as the Commanding Officer, Marine Safety Unit Chicago on July 8, 2016. Her previous assigned was at Coast Guard Headquarters as the Special Assistant to the Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard. Enjoying over 22 years of active duty service, CDR Merchant is a Type-I Incident Commander and a recognized authority in the complex and rapidly changing Marine Safety, Emergency and Environmental Management field.

From 2012-2014, Commander Merchant served as the Executive Officer of Marine Safety Unit Texas City. Her responsibilities there included carrying out the Coast Guard's Maritime Safety and Security and Marine Environmental Protection and Response missions throughout the deep-water ports of Galveston, Freeport and Texas City, Texas.

She also served as a Congressional Fellow on two committees in the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., from 2010 to 2012. During the 111th Congress, she employed her multifaceted expertise in guiding legislation that governed the Coast Guard and maritime transportation activities on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. At the start of the 112th Congress, she was selected to serve as a Fellow on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform where she supported the committee's oversight work on fraud, waste and abuse in the federal government.

From 2005 to 2008, Commander Merchant served as Supervisor, Port of Miami Field Office and Chief of Port Operations at U. S. Coast Guard Sector Miami. During this tour of duty, she led Sector Miami operations at three of the largest ports along the Eastern Seaboard. Prior to this tour, she served as an Executive Planner to the Coast Guard Flag and Senior Executive Service members at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C., and as a Marine Inspector and Port Operations Officer at Marine Safety Office New Orleans, Louisiana.

Commander Merchant graduated with honors from Tougaloo College with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and went on to complete Master's degrees in Quality Systems Management and Public Administration; and a Doctorate in Business Administration. In addition, she is a graduate of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Executive Education Leadership in Homeland Security Course and a 2015-2016 Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar XXI National Security and Foreign Affairs Fellow..

Commander Merchant has been honored with numerous professional, academic, and community service awards, including the 2018 Chicago Federal Executive Board J.F. Kennedy Leadership Award, 2018 USCG Captain Jarvis Inspirational Leadership Award, and 2017 USO LTC James M. O'Rourke Service Salute Award. Her personal military awards include two Meritorious Service Medals, six Coast Guard Commendation Medals, three Coast Guard Achievement Medals, two Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medals, and four Commandant's Letters of Commendation, Marine Safety Insignia and Commandant's Staff Identification Badge.